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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how to change English-as-a-Second-Language reading instruction within Japanese senior high schools into communication, or interaction between students and the text. It focuses on the use of top-down skills to increase reading comprehension, noting that Japanese teachers tend to naturally emphasize bottom-up skills and neglect top-down skills. Four chapters look at the following: (1) "The Present Situation of Teaching Reading at Senior High Schools in Japan"; (2) "The Fundamental Cause for the Present Problems" (emphasis on the bottom-up reading process model and limitations of this approach); (3) "Two Approaches Toward a 'New' Way of Teaching Reading" (skills and strategies approach and extensive reading approach); and (4) "Suggestions for Lesson Planning" (pre-reading activities, post-reading activities, and sustained silent reading.) Five appendixes contain previewing and post-reading sheets, graphic organizers, and a news article report. (Contains 19 references.) (SM)

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Using Top-down Skills to Increase Reading Comprehension

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Introduction

"What is communication in reading?" Communication necessarily requires two sides: the sender of information/message and the receiver of them. It is clear in reading that the sender is the author and that the receiver is the reader. Communication in reading means interaction between the author and the reader. However, the readers do not communicate with the author directly but through what was written by the author. Consequently, communication in reading means interaction between the text and the reader.

Since the importance of communication began to be advocated, many teachers have asked themselves, but not yet gotten an answer to the question, "How does interaction happen between the text and the students?" The reason for failing to answer the question is probably because of the firm belief that reading the text is regarded only as the activity in which the readers receive the information from the text. It follows that the readers are given passive roles of receivers of information and that "inter"-action cannot occur. In a word, if teachers are to make students active and interact with the reading, they will have to start with reconsideration of the reading process itself. But how should they rethink the reading process? How should the new view of the reading process be applied to the classroom?

This paper will discuss how teaching reading at the senior high school level in Japan can be changed in terms of communication, or interaction between the students and the text. First, the present situation, focusing on the problems about teaching reading, will be explained in chapter I. Next, the theory on the reading process will be surveyed in chapter II, and the fundamental cause for the present problems in Japan will be examined in chapter III. Then, two kinds of approaches to solving the problems will be introduced in chapter IV. Finally, chapter V will show the practical activities in the classroom.

I. The present situation of teaching reading at senior high schools in Japan

It is clear that English language education at senior high schools in Japan has recently changed in the fields of speaking and listening. There are two key factors: Assistant Language teachers (ALT) have been teaching since 1987 and the subject of Oral Communication (OC) has been implemented since 1995. An ALT, who is a native speaker of English, has classes with a Japanese teacher of English as an assistant. Many high school students have a team-taught class at least once a month. The existence of ALTs gives students not only many more opportunities to listen to real English and to talk with a native speaker of English, but also a strong motivation to use English. The subject of Oral Communication, as its name shows, aims at students' developing abilities to communicate orally. The OC class is often conducted in English, so students are exposed to much more English. More importantly, many high schools began to adopt listening comprehension tests or interview tests as mid-term or end-term examinations. Since English is a foreign language in Japan, namely, Japanese people do not feel it necessary to use English in real everyday life, an exam can be a strong motivation to learn English. Listening comprehension tests and interview tests cause students to feel that they should improve their ability to listen to or speak English.

However, little change has happened in reading materials and in the way of teaching reading. First, the materials used in class are only textbooks and only those authorized by the Ministry of Education and Science in almost all cases. There are two reasons. The first reason is the time limitation. The number of classes is now decreasing in Japan, but the content of what should be taught in class has not been decreased so much. As a result, we cannot afford to use materials other than textbooks. The second reason is mid- or end- term examinations. These exams are strictly text-bound, and the students have to take the "school-standardized test" based on the content of the textbook used at that school even though several teachers teach the same course. If some teachers use materials other than the textbook and others do not, the time spent working on the textbook will be different from class to class. This seems to mean, for the teachers, that they cannot prepare the students equally for the exam.

Therefore, the teachers become unwilling to use other materials because they tend to try to keep the same pace with each other by using the same textbook

Second, the way of teaching reading is almost the same as before. In other words, almost always, the approach adopted is the intensive approach. It means that reading is done for detailed comprehension of short, difficult texts under carefully organized guidance by teachers. In fact, the short passages in the textbook contain a lot of strange words, idiomatic expressions that students have to look up in the dictionary. Moreover, the teacher gives a lot of directions in class. Shih (1999) described a typical reading class in the Asian ESL/EFL setting, which is definitely true of the present situation in Japan, as follows:

> The students read new words aloud, imitating the teacher. The teacher explains the entire text, sentence by sentence, analyzing many of the more difficult grammar structures, rhetoric, and style for the students, who listen, take notes, and answer questions. They study new words; do grammar drills; answer comprehension questions; and do textbook exercises on pronunciation, grammar, spelling, sentence-making, and translation. (p. 20)

It can be concluded that, in this type of lesson, the immediate goal for teachers is to make the students understand the meanings of the sentences with lexical and grammatical knowledge, and the ultimate goal for them is to enable the students to gain linguistic knowledge about things such as lexicon and grammar and to apply them to other contexts correctly through various kinds of exercises. To sum up, the teachers adopt the bottom-up approach.

As a result of this kind of intensive approach, or, too much emphasis on bottom-up skills, the students come to think that all they have to do in reading English is to learn decoding skills with lexical and grammatical knowledge, because questions asked by teachers in class, even if those questions look like comprehension questions, are usually used to check whether or not the students understand the meanings of words, idioms or complicated sentence structure. Consequently, no matter what kind of text they read, the students tend to read every word with much care so that they can make correct answers to the questions mentioned above.

The Ministry of Education and Science acknowledged that our current way of teaching reading

has serious drawbacks and has declared that there is a need to change English reading instruction. The new Course of Study for Senior High Schools, which will be implemented in 2003, requires the teachers to take some points into consideration in teaching reading: making use of one's background knowledge, paying attention to the development or organization of each paragraph, and adopting appropriate strategies such as intensive and extensive reading according to the purpose or condition. These so-called top-down skills are not what have been emphasized so far in current classes. This paper gives some viewpoints in beginning the changes in teaching reading.

II. The fundamental cause for the present problems

In this chapter, the cause for the problem that was mentioned in chapter II will be examined through surveying current research on reading process: interactive process, a combination of bottom-up and top-down process is best described as the "human" reading process.

A. Emphasis on the bottom-up reading process model

1. Overview of the research on the reading process

"How do we read?" To this question, which seems simple but is really profound, many researchers have tried to find an answer. At present, there are three main models of how reading occurs based on various reading theories.

The first and oldest approach to the reading process is the bottom-up processing, which can be said to be a traditional view of the reading process. According to Eskey and Saville-Troike (as cited in Carrell, 1988a), it has existed since before reading research began to be recognized as an independent scholastic field. This processing goes from the smaller units of text to the larger units of it (Carrell, 1988b; Frehan, 1999). After the readers recognize the letters and know what word the combination of these letters are, they extract its meaning from their lexicon. Next, they construct the meaning of a phrase or a clause by gathering the meaning of each word. Finally, they build up the meaning for a sentence by assembling the meaning of each phrase or clause. In short, the meaning of a sentence

consists of the combinations of the smaller units of the sentence. In other words, meaning was considered to be buried in the text (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). What is emphasized in this processing, Segalowitz, Poulsen and Komoda (as cited in Anderson, 1999) described, is linguistic knowledge such as:

> word recognition and include visual recognition of letter features, letter identification, the generation of grapheme-phoneme correspondences, utilization of orthographic redundancies such as regularities in letter sequences, the association of words to their semantic representations, possibly the identification of basic syntactic structures within the portion of the text currently being read, and with the generation of prepositional units. (p. 3)

It follows that good readers are regarded as those who have an extensive vocabulary and can analyze the sentences by making excellent use of their grammatical knowledge with rapidity and efficiency. Therefore, many researchers thought that problems of reading comprehension were almost exclusively attributed to deficiency in linguistic knowledge or some decoding skill (Carrell, 1988a). Some researchers such as Nicholson and Perfetti (as cited in Hudson, 1998) wrote that reliance on the context instead of using linguistic knowledge was viewed as poor readers' strategy.

This processing in reading is almost the same as most Japanese teachers of English have in mind. Almost all of them seem to firmly believe that vocabulary and grammar are by far the most important, perhaps the only, tools in comprehending a text. This belief must be strongly related to the popularity of the bottom-up processing model in the United States of America when modern English language education began in Japan in the 1950's.

The second type of reading processing is top-down, which arose from psycholinguistics (Frehan, 1999). The greatest difference between this processing and the bottom-up processing is that, according to Goodman (as cited in Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983), readers do not use every piece of information in the text. That is to say, the readers select some parts of text according to their current purpose and use them only so as to predict meaning and to confirm the predicted meanings by relating the readers' own previously acquired knowledge (Carrell, 1988a). Many researchers have insisted that "the concepts which a reader brings to a text are actually more important than the text itself for

comprehension" (Mikulecky, 1990, p. 4). Among those concepts that the readers use in the process of comprehension, the knowledge about the content of the text, rather than the knowledge of the language of the text, is emphasized. As for linguistic knowledge, Segalowitz, Poulsen and Komoda (as cited in Anderson, 1999) stated that focus is mainly put on "higher-level" reading skills, such as "integrating prepositional units across sentences, generating and updating a schema or representation of the text as a whole, and integrating textual information with prior knowledge" (p. 3).

This processing should be more often introduced to English reading instruction in Japan because it has tended to be neglected. Teaching top-down skills will enable the students to read actively, or interact with text.

The third and newest reading process is currently most accepted (Anderson, 1999). The process which comes from schema theory is called "interactive processing" (Carrell, 1988b; Chia, 2001). Rumelhart (as cited in Carrell, 1988b) defined it as "a combination of top-down and bottom-up processing" (p. 101). Rumelhart (as cited in Mikulecky, 1990) explained how these two types of processing works as follows: In trying to comprehend a text, the reader is in the bottom-up mode when s/he "relies primarily on textual information", and s/he is in the top-down mode when s/he "focuses primarily on what is already known" (p. 2). Mikulecky (1990) and Chia (2001) insisted that both kinds of processing are employed simultaneously complement one another, which means that what is important in the interactive processing is both "second language proficiency and background knowledge about the topic of a text" (Mikulecky, 1990, p. 26). Stanovich stated that both of them compensate for deficiencies with each other (as cited in Anderson, 1999). So good readers are those who have "both decoding and interpretation skills" (Anderson, 1999, p.3) and, in Spiro's (as cited in Carrell, 1988b) words, "constantly shift their mode of processing, accommodating to the demands of a particular text and a particular reading situation" (p. 101).

The notion that reading is the interactive process, which means a kind of "whole" process because of making use of any other kind of knowledge other than linguistic knowledge, will change the

way for teachers to teach and the way for students to read English. Reading English becomes a little more similar to reading native language.

2. Problems with implementation of the top-down approach

Frehan (1999) stated, citing Kitao and Kitao, that "the bottom-up approach has remained popular in the teaching of reading in Japan" (http://langue.hyper.chubu.ac.jp). Why does not Japanese teachers of English adopt the interactive approach, which is considered to be best? More specifically, because the bottom-up approach has already existed, why is not the top-down approach accepted?

Eskey (1988) pointed out two problems about the top-down approach. First, he insisted that in the top-down processing model, decoding skills were greatly neglected through emphasizing the importance of "the prediction of meaning by means of context cues or certain kinds of background knowledge" (p. 93). Carrell (1988a) agreed with Eskey and criticized the top-down processing model, maintaining that "there has been a tendency to view the introduction of a strong top-down perspective as a *substitute* for the bottom-up, decoding view of reading" (p. 4). Japanese teachers of English, who think that language decoding skills always have a crucial role in reading foreign languages, may have difficulty in accepting the view that decoding skills were neglected.

Second, Eskey (1988) stated that a reader supposed in the top-down processing model is not appropriate for ESL/EFL reading, in other words, is far from the non-native readers. He said that the reader supposed in top-down processing is a "good" reader, who has already learned to decode the language. The use of the expressions "efficient/good/skillful readers" in explaining the top-down processing model show that the researchers who used such terms did not regard those who had a difficulty in decoding the language as a "reader". It is easily imagined that Japanese teachers of English are liable to accept Eskey's insistence that the top-down model alone "does not provide a true picture" (1988, p.93) of ESL/EFL readers because they think that their students are on the way to the mastery of grammatical knowledge.

It can be said that the inappropriate view of decoding skills and the reader supposed in the top-

down processing model prevent Japanese teachers of English from making a positive introduction of the top-down approach into reading class.

B. Limitations of the bottom-up approach

1. Considerations from psycholinguistic and schema theory

There is an agreement among reading specialists that a reader should be an "active participant" in the process of comprehending a text. Simply explained, the meaning is constructed by the reader, who creates connections between what s/he encounters in the text and what s/he knows about the world as well as about the language (Barnett, 1989; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Grabe, 1991; Hudson, 1998; Mikulecky, 1990). The key element here is the emphasis on the reader's background knowledge. The importance of the prior knowledge has been investigated through psycholinguistics and schema theory. Surveying them leads us to notice the limitation of the bottom-up model.

Since Goodman (1970) described reading as "a psycholinguistic guessing game" (p. 260), many researchers have insisted that reading is a more active process than the bottom-up model suggests. As was mentioned before, reading is an interaction between text and the readers, in which the readers use not only their decoding skills but also other kinds of knowledge. Mikulecky (1990) explained it citing the passage used by Branford and Johnson:

> A newspaper is better than a magazine. A seashore is a better place than the street. At first it is better to run than to walk. You may have to try several times. It takes some skill but it's easy to learn. Even young children can enjoy it. Once successful, complications are minimal. Birds seldom get too close. Rain, however, soaks in very fast. Too many people doing the same thing can also cause problems. One needs lots of rooms. If there are no complications, it can be very peaceful. A rock will serve as an anchor. If things break down from it, however, you will not get a second chance. (p. 1)

The words and sentence structures used in this passage seem not to be so difficult. It will not take so long to understand the meaning of each sentence if the reader has a basic knowledge of English. However, do the readers think, soon after finishing reading, that they understand the whole meaning of the text? Probably, no. They must be asking themselves, "What is this written about?" In trying to find the answer, they should be using knowledge besides linguistic knowledge because they have already understood the meanings of the sentences by accumulating those of the words, phrases and clauses with

their lexical and grammatical knowledge. This attitude of the readers means that linguistic knowledge is not the only thing required for a full comprehension of the text. It is not until they notice or are told the passage is written about how to make and fly a kite that they think they completely understand the passage. To sum up, not only linguistic knowledge but also any other kinds of knowledge is crucial in trying to comprehend a text.

In addition to the existence of the background knowledge, schema theory pointed out that what kind of schemata – the knowledge already constructed in the person – the reader brings to the text has a strong influence on the interpretation. Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) explained it using this sentence: "The policeman held up his hand and stopped the car" (p. 557). This sentence may be easy to understand. Both the vocabulary and sentence structure are quite simple. The most likely interpretation, according to Carrell and Eisterhold (1983), is as follows: The policeman was a traffic cop. His action of holding up his hands was a signal to stop the car. The driver of the car watched the action and understood what the action meant. The driver used a brake and the brake worked well, so the car stopped. Simply stated, in trying to comprehend the text fully, the reader uses much more knowledge than the text says explicitly. However, what if the policeman was Superman and the car did not have a driver? The interpretation would be drastically different from the first interpretation. Because there was no driver in the car, the brake did not work at all. He (= Superman) did touch the car and stopped the car by his physical power. In conclusion, the same sentences can generate the totally different interpretations. This can be an evidence of influence of the kind of reader's background knowledge on the interpretation of text.

What should be emphasized here is that more attention must be paid to the readers' background knowledge in the reading class. Especially, how their prior knowledge can function for successful comprehension should be discussed more because the influence or importance of background knowledge is not emphasized in reading class in Japan.

2. Considerations from the research on the problems Japanese readers face

Japanese students seldom have their English ability judged outside the classroom because they do not need to use English in real life. Therefore, examinations, especially entrance examinations for high school or university, tend to be considered the final criteria on whether the student has enough English competence. That is to say, if the student passes the entrance exam, s/he is thought to have good ability. No matter how poor at English the student really is, little attention is likely to be paid to actual ability once s/he succeeds in the exam. This tendency is much stronger in reading because the main part of the entrance examination is about reading.

However, can Japanese college students really be judged as good readers? Kitao and Kitao (1995) pointed out some problems that Japanese college students have in reading English, summarizing a lot of studies done by many researchers. The performance of college students can be regarded as the result of their junior and senior high school education, so it is worth contemplating their research.

Looking at ten suggestions for improving the teaching of reading by Kitao and Kitao (1995), they thought of the introduction of top-down processing skills and the extensive approach as the solution to the problems. They stated: Teachers 1) should do some activities before the students read the text; 2) should give them a purpose for reading; 3) should teach them the organization of English passages; 4) should teach reading skills, such as skimming, scanning, grasping the text organization; and 5) should have them do something using information they read.

These suggestions should be considered in trying to find a way of changing our way of teaching reading, because teachers should know the students whom they teach and should make a course or a class which is suitable for them. The research always shows that the students hope not only to get good scores in the examination but also to use English well. In other words, they want to use English outside the classroom – to read a newspaper, magazine or book – as well as inside the classroom – to answer the question well or to get good grades. We should guide them from "the fishbowl" – enclosed space in the name of classroom - to "the open sea" – the world of real

communication, as Yoshida (2001, p 1) suggested.

III. Two approaches toward a "new" way of teaching reading

In the previous chapter, the lack of top-down processing, or too much emphasis on bottom-up processing was considered as the main cause for the present problems in teaching reading English in Japan. In this chapter, two approaches will be discussed as concrete ways to teach reading English so that the interactive reading process can be introduced.

A. Skills and strategies approach

1. Pedagogical implications of the interactive reading model

The skills and strategies approach is one that is most reflected by the interactive reading model. Bamford and Day (1998) stated that there are four mainstream approaches of teaching reading in most ESL/EFL settings: grammar-translation, comprehension-question, skills and strategies, and extensive reading. Among them, the reason why the skills and strategies approach has become one of the major approaches is that this approach is "compatible" with the interactive reading model (Bamford and Day, 1998).

Eskey and Grabe (1988) explained in more detail why the skills and strategies approach is compatible with the interactive model. They stated that "an interactive model of reading... assumes that skills at all levels are interactively available to process and interpret the text" (p. 224) and so that "for second language readers, especially, *both* top-down and bottom-up skills and strategies must be developed... since both contribute directly to the successful comprehension of text" (p. 227). Other researchers supported their claim. Barnett (1989) wrote that "emphasis on using strategies ... has become central to second language reading theory and foreign/second language pedagogy" (p. 33) because the interactive model made it clear that the readers, who should be considered to play an active role in written communication, read with purpose and use some strategies according to the purpose. Grabe (1991), who conducted a survey on several reading studies in the early 1990s, when the

interactive model had been recognized as the most appropriate reading process, proposed that "specific skills and strategies should be given high priority and practiced consistently" (p. 396).

Introduction of interactive processing model to the reading class means that a larger variety of skills and strategies are taught in the class. The balance between bottom-up skills and top-down skills should be more seriously considered with much care.

2. Recommended skills and strategies

What kind of skills or strategies should be taught in reading is strongly related to examining what fluent reading is like. In fact, Grabe (1991) stated that "a primary goal for ESL reading theory and instruction is to understand what fluent readers do, then decide how best to move ESL students in that developmental direction" (p. 378). More specifically, Wallace (1992) said that "one starting point for the development of strategy-based approach is to consider what good readers do..." (p. 58).

According to Aebersold and Field (1997), along this line, there have been a lot of attempts by researchers to identify what a good reader does in comprehending a text. They showed, summarizing other research, that a successful reader does the following:

> Recognize words quickly / Use text features (subheadings, transitions, etc.) / Use title(s) to infer what information might follow / Use world knowledge / Analyze unfamiliar words / Identify the grammatical functions of words / Read for meaning, concentration on constructing meaning / Guess about the meaning of the text / Evaluate guesses and try new guesses if necessary / Monitor comprehension / Keep the purpose for reading the text in mind / Adjust strategies to the purpose for reading / Identify or infer main ideas / Understand the relationship between the parts of a text / Distinguish main ideas from minor ideas / Tolerate ambiguity in a text (at least temporarily) / Paraphrase / Use context to build meaning and aid comprehension / Continue reading even when unsuccessful, at least for a while. (p.16)

In short, as many reading specialists say, a fluent reader uses various kinds of appropriate strategies in reading text (as cited in Barnett, 1989; as cited in Grabe, 1991; as cited in Wallace 1992). Furthermore, what is important for teachers, as Mikulecky (1990) stated, is to recognize that some of these are for developing bottom-up skills, and others are for improving top-down skills.

Although all those skills should be treated equally, bottom-up skills are emphasized too much in Japan now. So, more focus on the top-down skills should be put so that students can interact with the text.

3. Basic framework of class

On the basis of the investigation on what successful reading is, many reading specialists have insisted that reading lessons should have such a framework as: pre-, during-, and post-reading instruction (Barnett, 1989; Brown, 2001; Grabe, 1991; Grabe & Stoller, 2001; Wallace, 1992). Barnett (1989) and Grabe and Stoller (2001) made a brief explanation about each type of instruction. Pre-reading instruction makes students interested in a text and predict the content of it through accessing necessary information and/or activating schema. During-reading instruction helps students read strategically, mainly focusing on decoding skills. Post-reading instruction extends or deepens what students comprehend from the text. One more thing that should be emphasized here is that the activities in this framework are not limited to reading. "Reading is no longer isolated" (Eskey & Grabe, 1988, p. 231). As in a real life, reading activities should be integrated with other skills – speaking, listening, and especially writing (Eskey & Grabe, 1988; Grabe, 1991; Grabe & Stoller, 2001). Accordingly, some of the activities must contain skills other than reading. Such kind of integration of the four skills will make it possible for students to use more varieties of strategies more often, generating more interaction between the reader and the text.

As Barnett (1989) noted, traditionally only during-reading activities have tended to be conducted in the ESL/EFL settings. Because it completely applies to the situation in Japan, pre- and post-reading activities should be taken into consideration. Especially, pre-reading activities are worth contemplating for us, because, in top-down processing, which should be introduced to our class, the readers make guesses, and confirm or change the guesses as they read. In order to let the students have some expectations about the content of the text, it is necessary to activate their background knowledge related to the text through pre-reading activities.

4. Considerations for adoption

At least two things should be paid attention to in using the skills and strategies approach: one is students' metacognitive awareness, and the other is the linguistic difficulties of the passage used for

class.

As for metacognitive awareness, or knowledge of what a reader does while reading, many reading specialists agree on the opinion that the skills and strategies approach should entail metacognitive awareness raising (Grabe & Stoller, 2001; Nutall, 1996). Carrell (1998) said that "both the first language and the second language research literature on reading strategy training which involves emphasis on ... metacognitive elements has clearly shown that such teaching can definitely make a difference in the short term" (http://langue.hyper.chubu.ac.jp).

According to Aebersold and Field (1997), it is very important for readers to be aware of two things: what the reading process is like and what they do when they read. As for the reading process, what should be emphasized first for Japanese students is that "it [reading] is not the same thing as translating" (Mikulecky, 1990, p. 33), reminding them of the skills or strategies when they read Japanese. Then, we should make them conscious of how they read, in other words, what kind of strategies they can use in reading English, applying the skills that they use in Japanese to those in English.

Many researchers have insisted that at least three things should be explained clearly in teaching reading strategies: what the strategy is, why it is important, and how it should be used. Especially, the importance of the strategy should be stressed. One way to do it, Brown (2001), and Armbruster and Baker (as cited in Mikulecky, 1990) suggested, is to provide the rationale for the strategy. Mikulecky (1990) showed concrete examples of rationale that will be told to students in class. For example,

> Sample rationale [for Previewing]
> Before you go on a trip, you probably look at a map in order to have some idea about the trip. You want to know what kinds of roads you will drive on, which cities or towns you will pass through, how long it will take, and whether or not there are any interesting sights along the way. This helps you enjoy the trip.
>
> Before you read, it is a good idea to find out about what you will read. If you look over (preview) the text before you read, you will help yourself understand and remember what you read. (p. 34)

Students usually say after class that they studied about some grammatical knowledge or some content in the class, such as, "We studied present progressive today", or "We read about Martin Luther King

Jr." However, when the strategy was taught, we should make students conscious of metacognitive aspects enough for them to say what strategies they learned in the class, for example, "We studied how to scan today." or "We learned how to skim and why it is necessary."

Introduction of the skills and strategies approach means that many different ways of reading are introduced to students. Through this approach, students are sure to know that reading English is not translating sentences into Japanese and that they should have as many ways of reading as they do in Japanese, even if they are not aware that they employ those strategies while reading in Japanese.

When the skills and strategies approach is really adopted in class, the text is an important factor. Mikulecky (1990) stated that in the class for teaching skills, we should make students pay attention only to that skill focused on in the class. That is to say, elements, such as "new vocabulary items, unfamiliar concepts or difficult grammatical structures" (p. 29) that will prevent them from concentrating on the skill must be avoided. If students encounter such things, their attention will be diverted. So the lesson will be not about skills but about new lexicon, culture or grammar.

According to the research on testing Japanese college students, "if a passage has more than five percent new words, it is difficult for students to understand" (Kitao & Kitao, 1995, http://www.king.lancs.ac.uk). Moreover, Shih (1999) pointed out that in Asia "words are chosen based on difficulty rather than on usefulness" (p. 21). In addition, teachers in Japan, who think much of vocabulary and grammar study, tend to think that "more should be taught in less"; in other words, the textbook selected is "dense" and contains many new words and difficult grammar in a short passage. To choose appropriate passages in the textbook is not so easy a task.

B. Extensive reading approach

1. Pedagogical implications of the interactive reading model

All the researchers and teachers agree with Frank Smith's (as cited in Nuttall, 1996) words, "We learn to read by reading" (p. 128). In other words, "No matter how sophisticated the teaching profession's understanding of and ability to teach the reading process, until students read in quantity,

they will not become fluent readers" (Bamford & Day 1997, http://langue.hyper.chubu.ac.jp). Since it is taken for granted that "reading is no different from other learned human abilities ... the more you do it, the more fluent and skillful you become" (Bamford & Day 1997, http://langue.hyper.chubu.ac.jp), no one can deny the importance of reading extensively.

More theoretically speaking, the extensive reading approach was based on the interactive model of reading, as Day and Bamford declared in their book, Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom (1998, p.12-15). In terms of the relation with skills and strategies approach, which is also based on the interactive processing reading model, reading extensively has a crucial role. Nuttall (1996) said that not all skills "are trained by studying shortish texts in detail" (p. 38). Eskey and Grabe (1988), who are main proponents of the interactive reading model, stated that "both top-down and bottom-up skills can, in the long run, only be developed by extensive reading over time. ... people learn to read by reading, not by doing exercises" (p. 228). Therefore, skills and strategies should actually be used in reading one book after another (Anderson, 1999).

In conclusion, the introduction of the extensive reading approach as well as the skills and strategies approach should be seriously considered for adoption into reading class in Japan, because both of them follow the interactive reading process model, which is the "real" reading process.

2. Recommended materials

When we try to introduce the extensive reading approach into our curriculum, the most serious problems will be about materials. What is appropriate for the extensive approach? This problem should be considered from three viewpoints: level, content, and collection.

First, the level of materials must be easy for students to comprehend, because in extensive reading students are basically supposed to read without help from teachers or peers. If the level of text is beyond the students, they have to use dictionaries frequently. As a result, fluent reading cannot be achieved and students will get frustrated or discouraged (Day & Bamford, 1998; Nuttall, 1996). Students should be led to become confident in and fond of reading through reading a number of easy

books.

Second, the content must be attractive to students (Nuttall, 1996). One of the main aims of reading instruction is to foster an attitude of reading for pleasure. If the content is not so interesting, the activity of reading itself might be boring or painful. Because the content of text has a great influence on how much students are involved in reading (Eskey & Grabe, 1988), the guidance in students' choice of books should be conducted carefully.

Lastly, the method of collecting materials should be addressed, because one of the main reasons why the extensive reading approach is not adopted is that it costs a lot of money to buy necessary books and it is extremely time-consuming to keep a library. One of the solutions to this problem may be to use the Internet. Fortunately, there are a lot of free, useful websites on the Internet. Those that can be recommended are the websites for children, where the English used is rather easy and there are a vast variety of topics. Although it sometimes takes a long time to find materials appropriate for students, the authenticity and the quantity of visual information help students to enjoy reading.

3. Basic framework for class

What is extensive reading? The formal definition is, according to the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, "intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encounter a liking for reading"(as cited in Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 6). In contrast to the intensive reading approach, the extensive reading approach is as follows; long texts, which are basically selected by students themselves, are read rapidly in large quantities for overall comprehension; less instruction is conducted by teachers, which means that extensive approach involves out-of-class activities; students have not only the right to decide what they will read but also the right to decide whether they continue to read the book (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Bamford & Day, 1997; Carrell & Carson, 1997; Day & Bamford, 1998).

The way extensive reading is adopted depends on how the extensive reading program is implemented and combined with what kind of content students read. As for the time for the extensive

reading, there are two options: one is in class, and the other is out of class, namely homework. If extensive reading is conducted in class, it can be in the form of Sustained Silent Reading (S.S.R.), in which students and the teacher reads materials silently and independently for a while, anywhere between ten minutes and twenty minutes, in class. In terms of the content of the materials, there are also two choices: one is that any kind of topic is allowed, and the other is that the content is related to that which has already been studied. The latter is based on the concept of "narrow reading" suggested by Krashen (as cited in Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). Narrow reading means reading a single topic or a single author. The merit of narrow reading is that readers come to comprehend the text more easily because they gradually get accustomed to the repeated vocabulary peculiar to the topic or the characteristics of the author's style. So, narrow reading can be used as a follow-up activity of the class. What must be emphasized here is that students must be given the right to choose the material within the topic decided by the teacher. Self-selected material is a key concept of extensive reading. To sum up, according to the condition, in-class or homework and any topic or topic connected with what has been already studied should be well combined so that the integration of extensive reading into the whole curriculum can be successful.

Because "intensive and extensive reading are complimentary and both are necessary" (Nuttall, 1982, p.23), extensive reading should be integrated into language curriculum (Grabe & Stoller, 2001), not just given as an assignment for long school holidays, which is rarely connected with class, but as a part of the curriculum related to in-class activities.

4. Considerations for adoption

There are two important differences between the extensive reading approach and the intensive reading approach which should be taken into account: one is how to assess students' progress and the other is the role of the teacher.

The ultimate purpose of extensive reading is to make students independent readers through enhancing a positive attitude toward reading and through making them aware of how enjoyable reading

is. This means that testing extensive reading is not desirable "because as soon as marks come in, reading for pleasure becomes reading for credit" (Nuttall, 1996, p. 142). This difficulty in evaluation makes the extensive reading approach difficult to be introduced. Thus, assessment of students should be made by means other than testing. Day and Bamford (1998) showed some examples. Among them, three ways - writing summaries and reaction reports, writing book reviews, and giving oral reports - can be strongly recommended, because those actions are usually done in real life. For example, we tell or write to others the plot of the story of the book briefly and express how we feel about it. Another reason is that those activities enable the integration of other skills, such as writing or speaking. If the content of what students read is to be used in testing other skills, they do concentrate on general comprehension of the text rather than individual words or sentences. In either way, at least, it is necessary to have students keep records of what they read.

One more thing that has to be considered in addition to the assessment is the role of the teacher. We have to change our image of what teachers are like. The role of teachers in extensive reading is very much different from that in intensive reading, because teachers do nothing in a "traditional" sense. They did not teach how to read or what the sentence means. They only guide students in choosing which books to read, and ask their impressions of the book, not directly ask about the meaning of the individual words or sentences. In a sense, teachers are not instructors but "a role model of a reader for students" (Day& Bamford, 1998, p. 8). Teachers themselves can read with students and show that they themselves enjoy reading, and share the pleasure of reading with students. As a reader, a teacher has to stand in the same position as students.

Both making of assessment and changing of the view of the teacher are not so easy. But teachers should introduce the extensive approach to our class, no matter how little we can do, in order to improve the students' reading skills.

IV. Suggestions for lesson planning

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the top-down skills, and pre- and post-reading activities should be more emphasized. In this chapter, concrete procedures in the classroom will be discussed. Also, the most realistic way to adopt the extensive reading approach will be introduced.

A. Pre-reading activities

1. Previewing

Previewing is among the most important activities which should be done in the pre-reading stage because it helps students to activate their schema and to predict the meaning of the text and because previewing is always done unconsciously when we read. This is the first step to enhance students' positive attitude toward reading.

One good point of previewing is that it can always be conducted regardless of the linguistic difficulties of the text because previewing does not require students to carefully read the text itself. Skills should be taught as continuously as possible, so it is very important. Another good point is that it can be taught that any kind of information in the text is indispensable in reading. In other words, emphasis should be put on such visual information as photos, illustrations, graphs, and charts, because they are closely related to what is written in the text (Chia, 2001) and so they are very useful in trying to get the gist.

The following procedure, which is adapted from Chia (2001), can be an example: 1) distribute a worksheet (see Appendix 1) to each student; 2) have students read the title of the lesson which they are about to work on and ask them what they know about the topic; 3) have students write in the left column on the worksheet as many things that they already know as possible; 4) have students look through all the visual information in the text, and ask them what will be written in the text judging from the visual information; 5) have students write in the right column on the worksheet as many things that they think will be written in the text as possible; and 6) have students exchange their ideas with each other in pairs, small groups, or a whole class, and write in the bottom part of the worksheet other

students' idea.

Students must be ready for reading the text through thinking of their own background knowledge themselves individually and sharing their ideas with other students. Although this activity takes time to set up and complete, it is necessary to make students active participants in processing text. Using the worksheet in the Appendix 1 could save preparation time and work as a guideline.

2. Semantic mapping

Semantic mapping, in which students make free associations about the suggested word, and group and label the words that students hit upon, was originally conceived as a way of vocabulary development (Barnett, 1989). But, semantic mapping can work as a good pre-reading activity if the word presented first by teacher is carefully chosen taking into account relation to the context of the text.

There are four advantages for semantic mapping as a pre-reading activity. The first advantage is that semantic mapping can always be conducted whether the text is linguistically difficult or not, because it does not require students to read the text. Secondly, in terms of vocabulary building, many new words can be introduced if students are allowed to use their native language. In this activity, use of L1 is recommended when students do not know the adequate English words, because it matters not whether students know the words but that students try more associations. The third advantage is that through trying to find the reason for their association students come to have a habit of thinking more of their prior knowledge. Lastly, semantic mapping guides students to pay attention to the whole organization, because they have to look over all the words in grouping or labeling the words.

The following procedure, which is adapted from many examples given by reading specialists, can be an example: 1) choose a word, phrase or a picture from the text that will elicit as many words as possible from the students; 2) have students make free associations with the chosen word, phrase or picture; 3) distribute a blank paper to each student, and have students write as many associated words as possible down on the paper, thinking of the reasons for their association; 4) have students group the associated words into some categories, and label the categories; and 5) have students exchange their

ideas with each other in pairs, small groups or a whole class, and make a map on the basis of students' ideas. In the last stage, it should be emphasized that students do not have to make the same map as the teacher. The way students themselves think is important. Therefore, students are recommended to make their own maps, adopting teacher's or other students' idea.

Through semantic mapping, students can prepare not only for the context but also the vocabulary necessary for the text. Moreover, the reasoning for association or grouping and labeling greatly helps students be more aware of what they know about the topic. It enables them to be active readers with much interest in the text.

B. Post-reading activities

1. Use of the results of pre-reading activities

Because, basically, activities in each stage - pre-, during- and post-stage, should be strongly connected with each other, previewing and semantic mapping must be related to post-reading activities. Actually, both of them can be used to teach how to write what students think of the content of the text.

As for previewing, it is a good way to compare/contrast what students thought about the text before reading with what they think of the text after reading the text. Before reading the text, students wrote what they already know about the topic and what they think will be written in the text. Both of them stem from the students, not from the text. On the other hand, what students know about the text after reading the text, comes from the text. So, comparing/contrasting what students write before reading with what students write after reading means that they are comparing/contrasting their ideas with the author's idea. This activity leads students to think more about the topic.

One way to do this is as follows: after reading the text, 1) distribute a worksheet (see Appendix 2) to each student; 2) have him/her write in the left column on the worksheet what they know only after reading the text; 3) have students choose the biggest difference between them and the author; 4) have students guess why the author writes differently from them; and 5) have students write the reason for that difference and the summary about what the author says in that point in the right column on the

worksheet.

What is important in this activity is to make students be aware that it is not until they predict the content that they can write their opinion about the text easily and that there is no right or wrong answer. In other words, reading the text does not mean searching for the right answers to some questions but making a connection between the text or the author and the reader.

The second way to utilize the pre-reading activity is to use the result of the semantic mapping. In the pre-reading stage, students have their own map, in which grouping and labeling are different from student to student. It is clear that the information and ideas on the map do not come from the text. Naturally, after reading the text, students get more words related to the topic, can add the new words that they acquired in the text to their original semantic map, and revise it. The revised map can be the combination of students' prior knowledge and knowledge learned from the text. That is to say, writing passages with both words that occur to students before reading and those that students learn from the text means that students write what the author says partially in their own words.

The procedure can be as follows: after reading the text, 1) have students put original semantic maps on the desk; 2) have students add the new words related to the topic that they learned from the text; 3) have students re-group the words into the categories and re-label the categories; 4) have students choose one category; and 5) distribute a blank paper to each student, and have him/her write the passages about that category without reading the text, taking into consideration what the author says in the text.

Two things should be emphasized explicitly in this activity: one is that there is no right or wrong answer and the other is that it is very important to have one's own opinion in reading. As in real life, reading is not an isolated activity but usually integrated with productive language skills. Students are made aware that after reading the text, it is important to have one's own opinion about it.

2. Comprehension questions

Use of comprehension questions is the most common way to check whether or not students

understand the text. However, without careful consideration of the questions, the questions are liable to assess only students' bottom-up skills. What should be taken into account in making comprehension questions?

Kohn (1994) noted, at the WATESOL Fall Convention that there are three kinds of comprehension questions: "right there questions", "think and search questions", and "in your head questions". To "right there questions", the answers are written clearly in the text. Usually, both the question and the sentence including the answer use the same words. In order to answer "think and search questions", students have to look for several different places. The answers to "in your head questions" are not found in the text. The readers create the answer themselves using the information that they acquire from the text.

It is evident that "in your head questions" are most strongly related to top-down skills because students have to use their own background knowledge. Therefore, "in your head questions" should be included in comprehension questions post-reading phase even if the number is very small. For example, when the material is a novel, the question like "what will the main character do the next day?" can be asked. When the material is an essay, "Do you agree with the author? If so, what part is the most attractive to you? If not, what part do you disagree most?" is possible. If time permits, it is better for students to exchange the ideas or opinions with each other. Different ideas or opinions deepen every student's thought.

3. Use of graphic organizers

Realizing how the text is organized is a very important skill. It is not until text organization is clearly recognized that it is possible to distinguish what is important and what is not, or to summarize the text. However, it is difficult to identify the whole outline of the text.

It is graphic organizers that help students to grasp the text organization. Graphic organizers are graphical representations with which students can comprehend the outline or organization of a text visually. According to Grabe and Stoller (2001), the use of graphic organizers enables students to "see

the key information in a text, the organization of text information, the ways that information is structured, and relationships among ideas presented in a text or a portion of a text" (p. 194).

Although there are many kinds of graphic organizers, "not all graphics work with all text. Thus, the teacher needs to read over the assigned text carefully and determine what types of graphic representations will assist students..." (Grabe & Stoller, 2001, p. 195). But there are some basic patterns according to the basic type of text organization. They (see Appendix 3, 4) were shown by Fry et al. (2000, pp. 283-287). It is better for the teachers to begin with the basic patterns, and then necessary changes should be made.

The following can be an example of the procedure: after reading the text, 1) show students some clearly different patterns of general graphic organizers and ask them which type of graphic organizers is appropriate; 2) guide students to an appropriate one through talking with them; 3) give students graphic organizers which are made for the text that they have just read and have them fill in the grid or matrix, looking over the text; 4) have students check the answers with each other in pairs or small groups and then in a whole class; 5) have students write the summary using graphic organizers, and exchange the summary with each other in pairs or small groups; and 6) have some students read their own summaries, and make some comments on them.

There seem to be two advantages in writing the summary with the graphic organizer. One is that students pay more attention to the organization of the text. There are some "right " answers in terms of summarizing. So, comparing/contrasting the summary with peers and thinking why the differences occur causes students to look with more care at the flow of the ideas and the way of text development. The other advantage is that students can become conscious of the text organization not only in reading but also in writing on their own. Students are sure to begin thinking how their opinions or ideas are organized as they experience more and more opportunities to do write summaries with the graphic organizer.

C. Sustained Silent Reading

The most practical way of introducing extensive reading is reading newspapers in Sustained Silent Reading. The reason is that it is much easier to collect the newspaper articles than to find the reading materials related to the content of the textbook. The websites in which current news are written for children can be found easily. The websites mentioned below will be useful in finding appropriate reading materials for students: http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/news/index.html; http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/world/default.stm; http://fyi.cnn.com/fyi/index.html; http://www.kidsnewsroom.com/.

The following can be an example of the procedure: 1) prepare several kinds of newspaper articles from some websites; 2) have students choose one article according to their own interest, and read it in ten minutes at the beginning of the class; 3) have them keep a record of the article in the newspaper article report (see Appendix 5); and 4) ask some of them how they feel about the article.

The assessment for this activity is, for example, done as one part of the interview test with the ALT. Usually, students have to prepare what to say about some topics for the test. As one topic for the test, students could be required to talk about one of the articles that they have read so far. Students choose one article, summarize it and say whether or not it is interesting for them, giving some reason. The result of the extensive reading is evaluated not as reading but as a part of speaking.

Conclusion

Japanese teachers have a strong tendency to think that the students must be treated equally, which means, in terms of instruction, that the same things should be taught to all the students. All Japanese teachers recognize the importance of grammar and vocabulary, so they tell the students to memorize as many words as possible, and spend much time in explaining complicated sentence structures. Therefore, bottom-up skills are naturally stressed.

On the other hand, top-down skills are not identified by the teachers enough for all the teachers to have some consensus. As a result, the top-down skills tend to be neglected generally. So, practical procedures of some activities in chapter V are introduced as concrete guidelines so that the teachers can reach a consensus and that all of them can conduct the activities to foster top-down skills in the same way.

Although the importance of top-down skills is emphasized all through this paper, as Nuttall clearly stated, one of the main purposes of our teaching reading is to develop students' bottom-up skills. Nuttall (1996) wrote, "nevertheless, it is probably right to devote more class time to bottom-up work" (p. 153). The reasons can be easily imagined: mastery of the bottom-up skills is the most difficult for students; and the successful interpretation of text cannot be realized without accurate understanding of the text. No teachers of foreign languages oppose these reasons.

Everyone will notice one thing, however, looking back at Nuttall's utterance again. She wrote "more class time", which implies that some time should be spent in cultivating students' top-down skills. Probably, our traditional way of teaching reading cannot be changed drastically due to the nature of learning a foreign language. Therefore, it is important not to try to change the class dramatically, but to try to make "small" changes continuously.

Previewing Sheet

Name:

Topic:

What you know about the topic	What you think may be written in the text
What your friends know about the topic	**What your friends think may be written in the text**

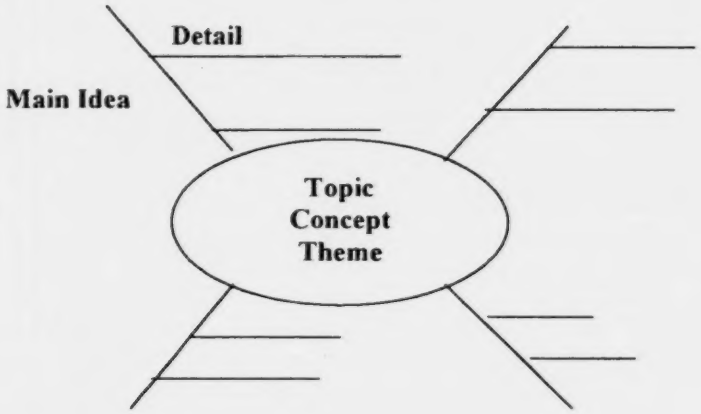
Post-reading Sheet

Name:

What you learn from the text?	Why do you think the differences occur?

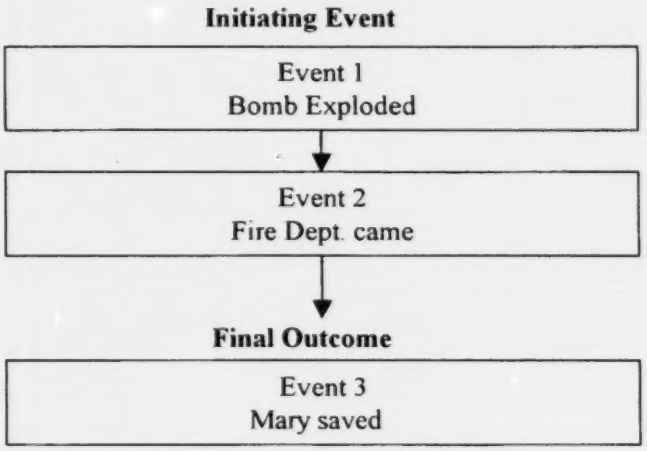
Your Summary

Graphic Organizers
Spider Map



Used to describe a central idea: a thing (a geographic region), process (meiosis), concept (altruism), or proposition with support (experimental drugs should be available to AIDS victims). Key frame questions: What is the central idea? What are its attributes? What are its function? (Fry et al., 2000, p. 283)

Series of Events Chain



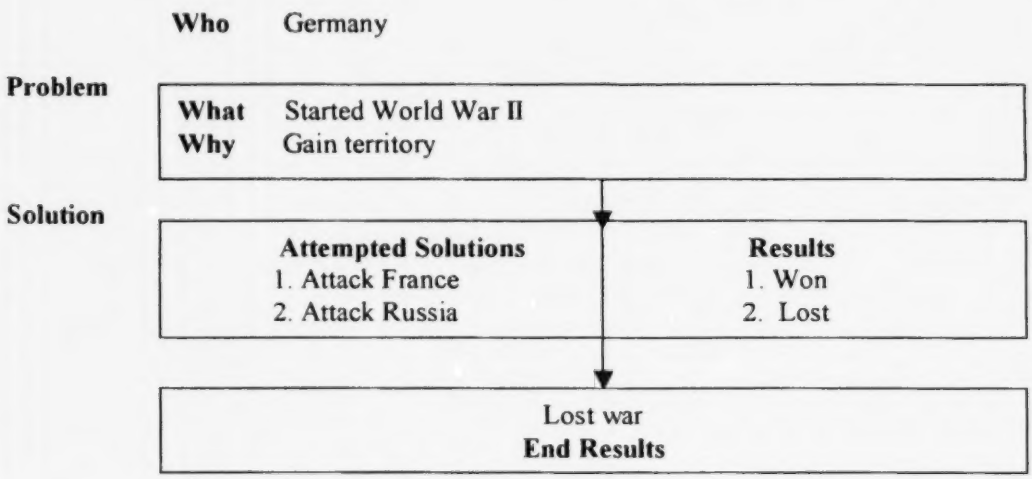
Used to describe the stages of something (the life cycle of a primate); the steps in a linear procedure (how to neutralize an acid); a sequence of events (how feudalism led to the formation of nation states); or the goals, actions, and outcomes of a historical figure or character in a novel (the rose and fall of Napoleon). Key frame questions: What is the object, procedure, or initiating event? What are the stages or steps? How do they lead to one another? What is the final outcome? (Fry et al., 2000, p. 283)

Graphic Organizers
Compare/Contrast Matrix (Spreadsheet)

	Maria	Sally
Attribute 1 Friendliness	Liked everybody	Liked only a few people
Attribute 2 Dependability	Always on time	Missed school often
Attribute 3		

Used to show similarities and differences between two things (people, places, events, ideas, etc.). Key frame questions: What things are being compared? How are they similar? How are they different? Spreadsheets can be enlarged to contain many rows and columns. (Fry et al., 2000, p. 283)

Problem/Solution Outline



Used to represent a problem, attempted solutions, and results (the national debt). Key frame questions: What was the problem? Who had the problem? What attempts were made to solve the problem? Did those attempts succeed? (Fry et al., 2000, p. 285)

News Article Report

Your name: Class:

Headline:

How much did you read? (Circle one)

I read all / more than half / half / less than half of the article.

How do you like the article? (Circle one)

Great! / Good! / OK / Boring

In the article,

Who:

When:

Where:

What:

Why:

How:

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